

Sheila McDaniel named Extra Mile Employee for April – June 2007

When Sheila McDaniel talks, she looks a person straight in the eye – the same way she approaches a challenge – straight forward. In early 2006, the Nurse II was given the challenge of becoming a Nursing Supervisor in the Prior Approval Unit and helping reduce a backlog of Prior Approval requests. Within a couple of months, the list was under control and a system in place to help prevent another backlog.

Mrs. McDaniel's "willingness to do whatever is necessary to complete a task, her ability to remain creative in her approach to achieve efficiency while always maintaining a optimistic way of thinking" were among the reasons cited for her recognition as the winner of the Alabama

The "Extra Mile" Award is given quarterly to an outstanding Medicaid employee who has gone beyond his/her assigned job duties. Nominated by a supervisor or co-workers, the recipient is chosen by a selection committee of Agency employees.



"Sheila was aware that she was gaining additional responsibilities and duties without any increase in her salary. This act demonstrated her positive attitude and willingness to go the extra mile," said Debra Shufford, Associate Director of the PA Unit, in her nomination of Mrs. McDaniel.

Mrs. Shufford also credits Ms. McDaniel with helping her through the learning curve of understanding the PA process as well as motivating/encouraging the reviewers to overcome the challenge of bringing a voluminous amount of PAs to a "current" status. "As a result, many of the complaints from recipients and providers have decreased considerably. Many providers have submitted correspondence as well as made phone calls singing Ms. McDaniel's praises," said Mrs. Shufford.

When Mrs. McDaniel joined Medicaid in the PA Unit in 2003, the unit was already working on a system to eliminate old requests from the system, said Dr. Mary McIntyre, but because of the volume of requests and the way they came into the system, many that got "lost."

In 2006, Dr. McIntyre, Mrs. Shufford and Mrs. McDaniel began working on a system to handle the situation. "Dr. Mac told us what to approve and what to override," Mrs. McDaniel said. "My part was to implement it and make sure it was accomplished."

"It took us two months to get the backlog down, and then we put a system in place for weekly checks of the PAUL screen in the Tandem system. This screen lists all of the pending PA's and the PA's that are conditional," she explained. The weekly check eliminated the chance of a request being overlooked.

As the Nurse Supervisor, Mrs. McDaniel oversees the day-to-day activity of 11 staff members and handles a full load of PA requests involving oxygen, prostheses, surgeries, private duty nursing, and illegal aliens.

Mrs. McDaniel said she tries to lead by example. "I have a positive attitude everyday because I know that I'm here to serve the people. You could come in with the attitude that I've got all this work to do and be a sourpuss. Other people will see that and it will affect their attitude and their work" she said. "A leader has to lead by example."

"I take personal pride in whatever I do. Whether it is it supervising or something else... anything, I just don't believe in doing anything half way. I believe if you are going to do something, do it correctly and thoroughly."

Where does she get the optimism that her supervisor referred to in the nomination?

"It comes from the fact that we are providing a service that Medicaid clients would not receive without us. We're doing a great service ... that's probably my main motivation... that I'm helping people. That's what any nurse would tell you...that we are motivated to help people."

Mrs. McDaniel rarely uses the word "I" in conversation about the PA Unit. "This unit is "We." It is all of us," she said. I'm only as good as the people around me allow me to be."

And what has she learned in supervising this unit that will carry over to her next assignment?

"Communication skills and a willingness to listen to others with an open mind," was her quick reply.

She and the PA Unit staff face more changes because the work of the unit is scheduled to be outsourced in October. "I don't know where we will go, but we'll do our best at whatever we are assigned to do.

Mrs. McDaniel earned her nursing degree at the Troy State School of Nursing in Montgomery. She and her husband, William, live in Montgomery. She has one son, Richard, who turns 26 in May.